

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 PANAMA 05405 281730Z

ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 EB-08 FAA-00 DOTE-00 SAB-02 /071 W

-----118279 281746Z /53

P R 281640Z JUL 77

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2941

INFO USCINCSO

PANCALAL

AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PBOR, PINT, EAIR, MILI, PN, PQ, BL

SUBJECT: MEDIA COVERAGE CONTINUES ON HELICOPTER INCIDENT

REFS: PANAMA 5371, 5388

1. LOCAL TABLOID "CRITICA" CONTINUES TO PRESS ITS CHARGE THAT HELICOPTER CARRYING BANZER AND TORRIJOS WAS HARRASSED BY U.S. AIRCRAFT OVER THE CANAL ZONE. THIS MORNING'S BLAST HEADED "SOUTHERN CAMMAND LIES", QOUTES HELICOPTER PILOT ROMO'S CHARACTERIZATION OF SOUTHCOM PRESS RELEASE ON THE INCIDENT AS "ONE OF THE MOST BAREFACED LIES I HAVE EVER HEARD." ROMO SAYS THAT THE FAA CONTROL CENTER DENIED HAVING CONTROL OF THE TWO A-7'S, AND CLAIMS THAT THE FAA CALLED HIM TO APOLOGIZE FOR THE INCIDENT AS HE WAS LANING AT PAITILLA AIRPORT. HE INDICATED THAT THE FAA SHOULD RELEASE THE TAPES OF FLIGHT OPERATIONS DURING THE INCIDENT TO PROVIDE THE TRUTH, BECAUSE "THEY CAN'T BE ERASED LIKE THE WATERGATE TAPES."

2. USSOUTHCOM PRESS RELEASE ON THE INCIDENT IS FRONT-PAGED IN ALL PAPERS EXCEPT CRITICA. EXCERPTS WERE PRESENTED BY BOTH  
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PAGE 02 PANAMA 05405 281730Z

LOCAL TV CHANNELS ON LAST NIGHT'S EVENING NEWS.

3. COMMENTARY ON INCIDENT IS LIMITED TO CARLOS NUNEZ' "PISANDO CALLOS" COUMN IN CRITICA, WHICH CRITICIZES LOCAL TV STATIONS FOR SEEKING INFORMATION ON THE INCIDENT FROM THE "YANKES IN THE CANAL ZONE", INSTEAD OF CONTACTING ROMO TO VERIFY CRITICA'S VERSION. NUNEZ WASPISHLY SUGGESTS THAT LOCAL

STATIONS ARE MORE "PRO-YANKEE THAN CHANNEL 8 (ARMED FORCES TELEVISION) IN THE CANAL ZONE."

4. COMMENT: DESPITE CRITICA'S EFFORTS TO THE CONTRARY, THE INCIDENT WILL LIKELY FADE RAPIDLY FROM THE PUBLIC CONSCIOUSNESS.

JORDEN

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NNN

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** NEWS MEDIA COMMENTS, ALLEGATIONS, AIRCRAFT HARASSMENT, HELICOPTERS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Sent Date:** 28-Jul-1977 12:00:00 am  
**Decaption Date:** 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 22 May 2009  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1977PANAMA05405  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Expiration:**  
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**Litigation History:**  
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**Office:** ACTION ARA  
**Original Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 2  
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**Previous Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** 77 PANAMA 5371  
**Retention:** 0  
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**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
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**Secure:** OPEN  
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**Subject:** MEDIA COVERAGE CONTINUES ON HELICOPTER INCIDENT  
**TAGS:** PBOR, PINT, EAIR, MILI, SOPN, PN, PQ, BL, US, (BANZER SUAREZ, HUGO), (TORRIJOS HERRERA, OMAR)  
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**Type:** TE  
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**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
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EO Systematic Review  
22 May 2009  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009